

No. 200-D-95- 905

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR STRATEGIC PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

WORKING DRAFT JANUARY 1995

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WHAT WE WANT TO DO

The Department of the Interior (DOI) will be an active leader in addressing the issue of environmental justice in DOI's programs and operations. To do that we must assure that the costs and risks of our environmental decisions do not fall disproportionately on minority and low income populations and communities. Information on environmental actions and involvement in our planning and decisionmaking processes by these affected publics are keys to that result. We will build both on old partnerships and seek to create new relationships to solve environmental problems. The Department will work with the Tribal governments to resolve their environmental issues. Finally, our expertise in science and resource management will be shared with others seeking resolution of environmental health and safety problems.

HOW WE GOT HERE

President Clinton asked the Department of the Interior to prepare a strategic plan on environmental justice. This was part of the February 1994 Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations). The Executive Order also established an Interagency Working Group (IWG) of Federal agencies to work on environmental justice concerns. In IWG task groups and with direct meetings with grassroots, industry, State, local and Tribal representatives we have been learning the community concerns about environmental justice. The American Indian Listening Conference attended by the Secretary also provided examples of environmental justice actions to the Department. In August 1994 Secretary Bruce Babbitt issued an environmental justice policy statement directing Department action. The Secretary named policy officials Anne Shields and Faith Roessel, assisted by Bob Faithful and Marsha Harley, to coordinate and develop Departmental efforts. An October survey on environmental justice, distributed to Departmental bureaus and organizations, provided background and ideas to assist in developing the Departmental strategic plan. In November an outline for an environmental justice strategy was developed and circulated to the public, National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), and the Department of Interior (DOI) bureaus for comment. During this idea-gathering process individual Bureaus and offices identified representatives to coordinate environmental justice issues. These representatives have contributed valuable ideas and examples for this plan.

OUR GOALS

The Department of the Interior goals concern both resources and people. Our responsibilities concern people living in the Caribbean and Pacific Islands to the northernmost shores of Alaska. We have a special relationship to American Indians and Alaska Natives which touches this entire plan. All of the Department's goals will be the subject of consultation and further development with Tribal governments in the next several months. Departmental action to carry out the goals will be in a manner consistent with both Presidential policy and Secretarial Order 3175 on "Government to Government relationships".

We have listed below our goals for environmental justice within the Department:

Goal 1. The Department will involve minority and low-income communities as we make environmental decisions and assure public access to our environmental information.

Goal 2. The Department will provide its employees environmental justice guidance and with the help of minority and low-income communities develop training which will reduce their exposure to environmental health and safety hazards.

Goal 3. The Department will use and expand its science, research, and data collection capabilities on innovative solutions to environmental justice-related issues (for example, assisting in the identification of different consumption patterns of populations who rely principally on fish and/or wildlife for subsistence).

Goal 4. The Department will use our public partnership opportunities with environmental and grassroots groups, industry, academic, union groups, and Federal, Tribal, and local governments to advance environmental justice.

In preparing these goals and plans we recognize the need to offer field managers guidance and flexibility on low cost effective means of working with their communities. We have provided in the next section examples of activities that are underway and strategies we still can accomplish. Local offices are urged to continue working with their communities to further refine and build additional steps. As one of the organization contributors pointed out, we need clear and specific actions with measurable results that also recognize budget realities.

WHAT WE ARE DOING/WHAT WE CAN DO

Goal 1. The Department will involve minority and low-income communities as we make environmental decisions and assure public access to our environmental information.

What we are doing:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM): The BLM has established a National Native American Program Office, located in New Mexico, to coordinate policy and guidance for all BLM programs. BLM holds many public meetings and "town meetings" on special national issues such as range reform, mining reform, the forestry plan, minerals management, resource planning, disposal of sewage sludge and other specific local issues. Since August 1993, BLM has had a formal policy of identifying minority, tribal or low income populations that may be affected by the pending decision during the preliminary scoping under NEPA, and to assess the impacts on them, and to involve them in our public participation processes. BLM also complies with the requirements under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) that mandate public input from American Indian Tribes when the Bureau's projects may affect Indian religious practices or sacred areas.

All State Offices include the Tribal governments on mailing lists for news releases, scoping letters and notices, and various other correspondence. The many BLM Districts with lands adjacent to Indian reservations, often provide extensive technical and regulatory support to the neighboring tribes. State Offices and District Offices maintain full recordkeeping practices on findings at public land hazardous substances release sites. State health agencies' and the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry's data related to such sites is also made available to the public through the BLM or through the appropriate agency. The BLM policy is to provide multi-language signs at risk sites that alert the public, in English, Spanish, and Navajo, to the fact that hazardous materials are present at the site. BLM is considering translation of brochures and other documentation on issues that potentially impact minority and low income populations environmentally.

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

OFFICE SURFACE MINING (OSM): The OSM is genuinely committed to the aggressive implementation of the requirements of the President's Executive Order on Environmental Justice. The Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program is particularly sensitive to the goals and ideals of environmental justice in minority communities, low-income communities and American Indian communities. Other initiatives and activities that focus particular attention on environmental justice issues are as follows:

- Appalachian Clean Streams Initiatives
- Remining Initiatives in the Affected Communities
- Active and full participation by members of the affected communities in all OSM sponsored public hearings
- Working closely with the States, Tribes, and industry to aggressively and thoroughly investigate complaints filed by citizens in the affected communities and resolution of those issues
- Ensuring the attendance of interpreters at all public hearings for non-English speaking participants
- The advertisement of public hearings and meetings in local mediums other than the local newspaper
- Holding public meetings and hearings in locations and facilities in the affected communities whenever possible.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE (MMS): The public is invited to participate in MMS sponsored meetings to submit written or oral suggestions on environmental issues and alternatives that should be analyzed on draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents.

- Decide what type of scientific and technical information is needed to support the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) decisions and prepare related decision analyses.
- Determine the scope of environmental impact analyses that are prepared for decisions to lease or conduct mineral development operations on the OCS.
- Ensure that MMS environmental analyses are of a high quality.

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

The MMS environmental documents are sent to local public repositories such as libraries and educational institutions. Notices of the availability of environmental documents and of related public hearings and meetings are given to the print and electronic media servicing potentially affected populations. The MMS has also established regional outreach programs to educate the public about the OCS program in general via exhibits at public events and conferences, presentations at schools and MMS-sponsored community meetings, and interviews with the news media. The MMS produces some public information documents in Spanish, Japanese, and Alaska Native languages to ensure that non-English speaking populations, potentially affected by OCS activities, are made aware of those activities. Examples of translated documents include press releases, "fact sheets," and layperson's summaries of technical studies and reports.

The MMS Environmental Studies Program (ESP) has established relationships with numerous academic institutions for the purpose of conducting OCS-related oceanographic and biological research such as the University of Alaska, Louisiana State University, Texas A&M University, the University of New Orleans, the University of Southwestern Louisiana, and Jackson State University.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION (BOR): BOR maintains public involvement specialists in the regions and Denver Technical Service Center. These specialists inform and encourage participation of all interested and affected groups in a project. For any projects that affect Indian trust assets, or have any involvement with a tribe or its members, the tribes are considered full partners in the activity and are part of any decisions made concerning the tribe's safety and environmental well being.

Technical writers and policy analysts produce and review all documents placing considerable efforts on producing concise, understandable, and readily accessible documents. Notices of public meetings are published in news media and through electronic media (radio and television) as well as the Federal Register. NEPA documents requiring public review are made available for display in public libraries and distributed to all upon request.

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

Some modeling efforts and testing have been referred to universities and colleges, but BOR tends to use its own personnel in research, communication, or leadership efforts. To further environmental justice, the BOR has partnered with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Hispanic-serving institutions to help provide education.

BUREAU OF MINES (BOM): The Bureau has facilitated exchanges with lead paint environmental justice experts from the NAACP and the National Safety Council with the BOM lead science center office. The Bureau of Mines participates in the hearings of land management agencies and other agencies involved in issues related to research in mining and miner health and safety. The Bureau works closely with a number of universities and colleges in the conduct of its research. The closest and most formal relationship is with the U.S. Department of the Interior's 31 Mineral Institutes which may prove to be helpful to the Department in its pursuit of the environmental justice effort (Reference: the 1994 Mineral Institute Report).

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS): The FWS provides input to the public on its activities through a variety of communications media, including CompuServe, Internet, news releases, press advisories, fact sheets, an agency newsletter, public service announcements, Federal Register notices, public meetings, workshops, and targeted mailings. In addition, brochures, posters, exhibits, other general publications and videos (close-captioned for the hearing impaired) are developed to provide information to the public on major FWS programs and activities. Internet has the potential ability to reach millions of people on a global scale.

The FWS is working on various projects with Indian tribes along the United States-Mexico border that may benefit fish and wildlife resources, as well as the Indian tribes. Many of these projects further the goals of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); abatement projects will result in positive effects on tribes and low-income communities and populations on both sides of the border. The FWS is working with other federal agencies in the implementation of these activities (Reference: President's NAFTA Report on Environmental Issues, November 1993).

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

The FWS is continually updating guidance for subsistence taking of fish and wildlife on federal lands in Alaska. Concerns regarding impacts on Alaska Natives were addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An interagency team representing the FWS and four other federal agencies from the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, conducted 58 scoping meetings and 41 public meetings. A major effort was exerted to communicate with all Alaska Native villages, Alaska Native regional corporations, and major Alaska Native groups in Alaska for consultation.

The FWS is cooperating with Canada and with various American Indian tribes on a proposed Migratory Bird Treaty protocol for subsistence take by Alaska rural residents. Additionally, there is a cooperative management effort with Alaska Natives and Russian indigenous peoples for the polar bear.

Successful FWS programs that target inner city and other indigent groups are as follows:

- Job Corps centers, located on three refuges, were created through interagency agreement with the Department of Labor. Training activities involve conservation activities such as restoring wetlands, building nature trails, construction of refuge facilities, fishing derbies and junior hunting programs.
- The Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program reaches young people from all parts of society.
- Earth Stewards Conservation Education Program reaches young people from all parts of society.
- Adopt-A-Wetland Program reaches young people from all parts of society.
- "A Home for Pearl" curriculum guide is particularly targeted to urban youth.
- Partners for Cultural Diversity Program focuses on encouraging minorities to pursue natural resource careers.

The FWS requires that recipients seek input from minority and disadvantaged communities. The FWS also requires that minority and disadvantaged individuals be included on Recipient Advisory Councils. Assurance Agreements are made between recipients of FWS funds and various State field stations and contractors to ensure adherence to civil rights requirements.

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

In the Alaska Region, the FWS conducts numerous hearings and informal meetings associated with decisions or planning processes that affect "bush" communities. Newsletters, mail back comment sheets, and public service announcements on local radio stations are used. FWS project leaders, planners, and biologists are expected to make contact with Alaska Native tribes, organizations/groups and other interest groups as early as possible within the process to ensure that all affected parties understand FWS proposals.

In that regard, the FWS employs Alaska Native interpreters who assist in gathering data within their communities. A wide variety of fish and wildlife and environmental information and education projects are done in conjunction with Alaska Native corporations and local schools in the bush communities. For example, posters, exhibits, public service announcements, and even calendars have been produced in languages other than English to reach non-English speaking Native publics. Many FWS notices, particularly for rulemaking, have "boiler plate" language that has been extensively reviewed to ensure it is concise and understandable.

Some refuge and Ecological Services field offices provide public documents and notices in Spanish; and several field offices have Spanish/English speaking personnel to provide oral communications in and out of the field offices and at public and informal meetings.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS): The NPS has an extensive public involvement and participation program incorporated into its planning and decisionmaking process. The NPS makes diligent efforts to involve potentially affected publics in scoping, development of alternatives, analysis of impacts, and public review of activities. In the past, these efforts have included the development of written materials for non-English speaking populations, as well as the use of translators for non-literate, non-English speaking populations. The NPS efforts are consistently made to produce concise and understandable documents, notices and other materials concerning the impacts to the human environment, including public health and safety as well as socio-economic effects.

Goal 1.--What We Are Doing

NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SURVEY (NBS): Scientists notes, field books, and other data are provided to the public upon request. (Note some data is restricted but receives prompt review for appropriateness of release.) Technical experts provide advice and guidance to other agencies to provide input for their public documents. All offices post any health hazard bulletins on public electronic bulletin boards. NBS has about 50 Cooperative Research Units at colleges across the country. These are the combined efforts of federal, state and university activities. The focus of these units is on biological research.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (BIA): Tribal governments and their members are always involved in Bureau actions involving public participation and access to information. The majority of their actions are initiated by tribes or individual Indian landowners. The BIA actions, such as regulations, handbooks and guidance documents, are subject to tribal scrutiny prior to approval. Updated manuals, which are widely distributed, help ensure that documents are concise and understandable. Tribal concerns are discussed and mentioned throughout the NEPA documents, especially in the "Alternatives" and "Socio-Economic" sections. The Bureau usually has had interpreters present at public hearings concerning its NEPA documents. Public documents, notices and hearings are available and open to all tribes as appropriate.

Goal 1.--What We Can Do

Strategies on what we can do:

A. We can share the principles for public participation meetings developed by the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Subcommittee on Public Participation and Accountability and recommendations by the Interagency Working Group Outreach Task Force so that local DOI organizations can adopt as appropriate:

"Guiding Principles of Public Participation. Public participation is needed in all aspects of environmental decision making. Communities and Agencies should be seen as equal partners in dialogue on environmental justice issues. In order to build successful partnerships, interactions must: recognize community knowledge; encourage active community participation; institutionalize public participation; and utilize cross-cultural formats and exchanges. Maintaining honesty and integrity in the process by articulating goals, expectations, and limitations is necessary."--NEJAC

Progress Measurement - DOI, Office of Environmental Justice will distribute key IWG and NEJAC final reports and recommendations by March 1, 1995.

B. The Department will work to improve its procedures and guidance, under the NEPA. Interior will expand opportunities for community input in the NEPA public involvement process by actively seeking the involvement of minority, low-income communities and Indian tribal governments. Under NEPA, Interior and its Bureaus will inform the public about periods of comment and public forums and meetings, where all stakeholders have an opportunity to comment on major Interior policies, activities, and actions.

Progress Measurement - Distribute the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Reports developed on improvements in public involvement and social impacts by March 1, 1995.

Progress Measurement - Each Bureau will draft communication on how they intend to pursue outreach for public participation by April 1, 1995.

Goal 1.--What We Can Do

C. The Department will review current reports and recommendations and look to address American Indian and Alaska Native issues. The Department will address in the implementation plan the issue of providing an opportunity for tribal grassroots organizations and individuals to express their environmental concerns related to actions taken by Interior.

Progress Measurement - The BIA will formally appoint a liaison to assist the other Departmental and Bureau Coordinators by February 1, 1995.

Progress Measurement - The Bureau of Indian Affairs will present by September 1995, after Tribal consultation, a strategic implementation plan integrating and addressing the factual data, concerns, and recommendations presented by 1) the American Indian Listening Conference concerns on Environmental Justice from April 1994; 2) the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group Native American Task Force Discussion Paper on Environmental Justice for American Indians and Alaska Natives December 1994; and 3) the May 1994 National Tribal Environmental Council report on the status of tribes and the environment.

Goal 2. The Department will provide its employees environmental justice guidance and with the help of minority and low-income communities develop training which will reduce their exposure to environmental health and safety hazards.

What We Are Doing:

DOI-SECRETARY'S OFFICES: Issued to the IWG copies of video, "Federal Indian Trust Responsibility on December 12, 1994. Additional copies may be obtained from the Office of American Indian Trust. Also issued was a map entitled, "Indian Land Areas". Additional copies may be obtained from BIA, Public Affairs Office. Issue guidance on special government-to-government relationship when seeking solutions for the varied environmental issues that involve Tribes. Any tribal environmental justice directives will assure application of Federal Indian Policy, as reinforced by executive memoranda dated April 29, 1994, which requires the federal government to: 1) pursue the principle of Indian "self-determination", 2) work directly with Tribal governments on a government-to-government basis and 3) to consult with Tribes. Federally recognized Indian tribes are distinct political entities, capable of managing their own affairs and governing themselves. As such, the Department recognizes federally recognized American Indian tribes as providers of environmental justice to members and persons who are subject to their jurisdiction. Upon the request of a tribal government, the Department provides assistance. (An example is the judicial systems/processes guidance provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Judicial Services program.)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT: Environmental Justice guidance is given through an Instruction Memorandum entitled "Policy of Promoting Environmental Justice in Public Lands Decisions", and an Information Bulletin entitled "Strategic Plan for Environmental Justice". The BLM has also drafted a handbook on American Indian consultation. The handbook is a joint product of an agreement between the BLM and the National Indian Justice Center on improving communications between the Bureau and tribes and improving tribal access to BLM processes.

Goal 2.--What We Are Doing

Since the mid-1980's, the BLM has made a special and increasing effort to avoid authorizing high risk activities on the public lands. Some activities, such as new sanitary landfill authorizations, have been banned entirely; others, such as non-emergency aerial spraying of pesticides, have been virtually eliminated. The effects of land purchases, BLM waste disposal and prescribed burning, as examples, and most other activities are carefully analyzed for environmental and health risks in advance. BLM is working with the Department of Defense to reduce risks from former military uses. The BLM responds rapidly to unpredictable incidents such as illegal toxic waste dumping, transportation accidents involving chemicals, wildfires, oil spills, and others.

The BLM State Offices send employees to dispute resolution training in a broad range of centers, institutes, colleges and universities. Several BLM employees are nationally known for their mediation skills in natural resource based conflicts and provide assistance to other DOI agencies and to Indian tribes.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION: All Reclamation projects, regardless of whom they affect, contain mitigation for any environmental impacts. No distinction is made for any particular group, except under the Indian trust asset policy. Guidance criteria include general regulations such as the National Environmental Policy Act Handbook and the newly issued Indian trust asset policy and implementing procedures. Rules directed against discrimination by race, religion, and so forth are established through federal as well as Reclamation guidelines, and laws. Some programs and activities which target minority communities are described below:

1. Public Law 93-638 - Reclamation enters into Indian Self-Determination, Education and Assistance Act ("638") contracts with tribes under this program. Under this program, tribes assume responsibility for programs and projects and thereby "side-step" many of the bureaucratic and social hurdles that created environmental justice problems. Reclamation has provided training to its employees to deal more effectively with contracts related to this law.

2. Water Systems O&M Workshops for Indian tribes - These workshops make available expertise similar to that at the annual Water Systems O&M Workshop held in Denver with three notable exceptions. The workshops are held at no cost to the benefiting Tribe. Second, these workshops are brought to the tribes rather than vice-versa, allowing a greater and more diversified attendance. Third, specialty workshops have been held on several subjects including: irrigation system O&M, damtenders' training,

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municipal and industrial water systems, and procedures for high-scaling.

3. Engineering technical assistance - Under a Memorandum of Understanding executed in 1993 between Reclamation and the Navajo Nation, Reclamation established a full-time General Engineering position to work with the Navajo Nation to provide technical assistance concerning rehabilitation of the entire Navajo Nation's irrigation system and to assist in establishing an irrigation office.

4. Native American Cultural Awareness Workshop - This Reclamation-wide Cultural Awareness Workshop was designed to educate upper and middle managers in Reclamation about key concepts concerning American Indians and to increase awareness of barriers that have sometimes interfered with interactions between Reclamation officials and American Indians.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE: Through the FWS's Office of Training Education (OTE), a variety of training courses are offered to Service managers that include elements of conflict resolution and deal specifically with inter-cultural and minority conflicts.

In June 1994, the FWS released its Native American Policy. The purpose of that policy is to articulate general principles to guide the FWS's government-to-government relationship with American Indian and Alaska Native governments in the conservation of fish and wildlife resources. It is a partnership approach with American Indian governments that respects and utilizes the traditional knowledge, experience, and perspectives of American Indians in managing fish and wildlife resources.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: The NPS has used alternative dispute resolution (ADR) policy instructions in a variety of situations not only in conflicts with minority and low income populations and Indian Tribal governments, but with affected publics in conflict situations. Awareness of ADR use is provided in training programs concerning environmental law and policy, and environmental evaluation.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS: The approval process for BIA activities are tightly governed by technical standards and guidelines designed to prevent such harm. As an example, the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Campo solid waste project required design standards that exceeded both

Goal 2.--What We Are Doing

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Goal 2--What We Are Doing

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State of California standards. Also, approval of restricted use pesticides is controlled by EPA regulations and DOI review committees, and the pesticides are applied by certified applicators. Tribes generally have veto power over BIA actions on the reservations.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE: The MMS has provided many of its employees with training in basic environmental conflict management techniques. This was accomplished at a series of recent regional workshops conducted by a consulting firm under contract to the MMS.

Goal 2.--What We Can Do

Strategies on what we can do:

A. Departmental policy regarding environmental justice will be developed, coordinated and disseminated in the following areas:

- 1. Publish guidance reflecting the latest scientific information available regarding methods for evaluating the human health risks associated with the consumption of pollutant-bearing fish or wildlife.**

- 2. Review and update for agency contract officers and applicants materials on minority contractor processes about the evolving area of environmental justice. This will be in conjunction with the Interagency Working Group Outreach Task Force effort.**

- 3. Issue guidance, following Department of Justice direction, on application of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to environmental justice issues.**

- 4. Establish a working group and a calendar to alert groups on environmental justice issues.**

B. Guidance on environmental justice and the American Indian and Alaska Natives will be the basis of consultation with tribes and incorporate the issues and recommendations identified at the 1994 American Indian Listening Conference.

Progress Measurement - Designate contact/liaison person within each bureau to accommodate Environmental Justice questions, concerns and referrals. Each office will develop and issue interim guidance for specific directives noted in the Executive Order on Environmental Justice. As part of this guidance Interior organizations will identify and share examples of ongoing DOI-community participation by February 1995.

DOI-Office of Environmental Justice will distribute to Interior's offices EPA's report, "Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors of American Youth" by March 1995.

Progress Measurement - DOI-Office of Environmental Justice will coordinate with EPA to publish the President's and Secretary's policy and mission statements on Environmental Justice via a one-page newsletter or talking paper. On a regular basis, publish Environmental Justice successes and concerns.

Progress Measurement - Explore provision of universal sign symbols to designate dangers at hazardous materials and other

Goal 2.--What We Can Do

sites on Department and Bureau land located in or adjacent to minority and/or American Indian communities or lands by December 1995.

Progress Measurement - DOI-Office of Environmental Justice will distribute final recommendations of the Native American Task Force on Environmental Justice with the products provided as the Tribal Leaders Directory and the Native American Organizations by February 1995. These documents will commence the consultation process with the tribes to build American Indian and Alaska Native guidance.

Goal 3. The Department will use and expand its science, research, and data collection capabilities on innovative solutions to environmental justice related issues (for example, assisting in the identification of different consumption patterns of populations who rely principally on fish and/or wildlife for subsistence).

What We Are Doing:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT: The BLM's National Native American Program Office will coordinate and explore new approaches to the principles of the Indian Self-Determination Act and creative adaptations to Rural Empowerment Zones affecting all rural low income people.

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING: The OSM studies which facilitate collection or analysis of human health and environmental data relating to high or adverse impacts on minority, tribal, or low income populations are:

- Black Mesa - Socio-economic Analysis; Cumulative Hydrology Impact Assessment; Navajo Aquifer Study; and the Alternative Transportation Study

- Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Inventory is a data base which references community health and safety issues and could assist DOI or national federal efforts to eliminate adverse impacts of environmental actions on minority, tribal, or low-income communities and Indian tribal governments and members.

- Several data bases on the Internet which reference community health and safety issues. OSM is in the process of developing its own Gopher and Worldwide Web Server on the Internet.

- Technical Information Processing System (TIPS) three-dimensional graphic analysis to pinpoint levels of toxic or acid-producing materials.

OSM has initiated action to establish an Advisory Board in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). This action is currently pending GSA and OMB approval. The OSM Advisory Board will consist of representatives from OSM's constituent groups, including citizens, American Indian tribes, states, environmental groups, and industry. The Board will advise OSM on a variety of environmental and regulatory issues. American Indian and citizens in the coal fields will have a direct link with the Director of OSM in airing and resolving concerns. OSM views the establishment of this Advisory Board as an advanced step in addressing concerns relevant to environmental justice.

Goal 3.--What We Are Doing

MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE: The MMS has conducted numerous studies about the potential effects OCS development has on the subsistence life styles of Alaskan Natives. These studies also collect data about fish and wildlife and the potential effects of OCS development on the quality and availability of subsistence resources and patterns of fish and wildlife harvest and consumption. The MMS has also completed a study of Northwest tribes that describes the conditions of Northwest tribal lands, economies, and cultures.

The MMS is planning to conduct a baseline study of social and economic trends in the Gulf of Mexico coastal region from 1930 to the present. Among the many issues to be examined are the impacts of oil industry activities on the health of various groups that reside in the region.

The MMS is cooperating with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) in an effort to gather data on the harvest and consumption of wild food by the inhabitants of 30 Alaska Native villages. The study is scheduled to be completed in March 1995.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION: Reclamation collects data which display human health and environmental-based problems and needs for water treatment and distribution systems as follows:

- Photovoltaic technology to improve water quality on the Navajo Nation.

- Water Treatment Technology Program (test project taking place on the Navajo Reservation) includes:

1. Compiling national treatment needs survey;
2. Identifying small community water treatment systems;
3. Desalting membrane development;
4. Wellhead treatment processes;
5. Encouraging new ideas from small operators;
6. Western water projects;
7. Technology transfer;
8. Supporting emerging water treatment technology; and
9. Detoxifying wastewater treatment processes effluent.

BUREAU OF MINES: The BOM works closely with the Mine Safety and Health Administration data to investigate cases and possible solutions to health problems associated with mining which may have some bearing on Indian health issues since some mines are on Indian land. Research and data collection is on the mining industry and its impacts on the land and ecosystems surrounding the mineral industry.

Goal 3. What We Are Doing

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE: The FWS conducts short-term and some long-term studies and research related to various environmental issues, such as the management of refuges, fisheries, and environmental contaminant issues. Examples of studies that may relate to environmental justice issues are as follows:

1. Region 2 (southwest United States) is planning to conduct economic analyses of possible adverse impacts arising from the designation of critical habitat for the Mexican spotted owl and the Rio Grande silvery minnow on minority or low-income communities and populations and Indian tribal governments and their members. These analyses will address rural economies and small-scale farming.

2. Contaminant baseline investigations in the lower Rio Grande valley of Texas are helping to assess impacts to fish and wildlife resources and alert minorities to potential environmental pollution concerns.

3. Region 7 (Alaska) is currently conducting traditional (Alaska Native) knowledge and consumption surveys for polar bear, walrus and sea otter.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: A socio-economic research project continues providing existing census data to identify those counties adjacent to National Park system units that have substantial minority or low income groups or individuals residing in adjacent areas. Departmental access to census records could be made available by computer or CD-ROM. NPS could also present surveys and case studies regarding involvement of minority and low-income groups in the development of park or environmental restoration projects.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY: The USGS is a scientific earth science information and research agency generating baseline data to state and federal agencies which have responsibilities for ensuring the basic justice of their environmental programs on minorities or low income communities and Indian tribal governments and their members. For example, the USGS collects, analyzes, and compiles information on water quality, sediment quality, and in some instances contaminants in fish.

Goal 3.--What We Are Doing

NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SERVICE: The NBS is in the process of developing a program to monitor the effect of contaminants on biota and ecosystems. This program is called Biomonitoring of Environmental Status and Trends (BEST) and when implemented may be able to provide information that would give an analysis of environmental justice issues. Other biological inventory and monitoring activities may show trends in species or ecosystems that relate to potential human impacts.

NBS uses the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII), a distributed electronic network linked to DOINET and Internet for serving and accessing biological information. The NBII is a network of many distributed data bases and technologies, implemented and maintained by a wide range of data owners, working with data managers, technicians, and data providers both inside and outside of the NBS. The NBII will allow users the world over to discover, access, and analyze data, located in files, publications, and computers in federal, state, tribal and local governments and in non-government organizations.

NBS has also initiated research and is gathering biological information pertaining to twelve ecosystems. This information may have some utility in examining community health and safety issues.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS: The BIA's major actions are the result of tribes approaching the Bureau with economic development proposals. These proposals may take the form of waste disposal activities, uranium mining, oil and gas development, gaming facilities or other ground disturbing activities. Research and scientific studies to support these actions are basic requirements of the Bureau.

Goal 3.--What We Can Do

Strategies on what we can do:

A. The Department will share its environmental justice inventory data collected on the social, economic, and health issues of minorities or low income groups and Indian tribal governments and their members. We will work with representatives of minority and low income-communities, tribal governments, industry, and government to evaluate health, safety, social, and economic impacts related to current and proposed environmental management activities. BLM suggests the establishment of a clearinghouse for information and repository of data and studies related to environmental justice issues. Such a clearinghouse could be cost effective for DOI-wide use. BLM suggests that a state-by-state catalog of relevant reports be published annually. Reclamation suggests examining its Indian Assistance program in some detail to understand better its successes, failures, and needs. The results of the study could be a basis for expanding our entire environmental justice program and become a logical bridge to what should be an expanding concern for social and environmental justice.

Progress Measure: In the implementation plan for February 1995 include a science segment of actions which can be further refined at the proposed Federal science summit on environmental justice.

B. DOI Bureaus and Offices will use the recommendations of the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group Task Force on Research and Health. In addition, we will use and share the broad guidelines and recommendations of the Symposium on Health Research and Needs to Ensure Environmental Justice held in February 1994.

Progress Measurement -Distribution of information will be made by the Department by the end of February 1995.

C. The Department's science organizations will review current customer service plans to assure that minority and low-income populations are engaged in our research processes.

Progress Measurement - The DOI will explore the suggestions cross-referencing the Customer Service Plan, prepared in response to Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards" to the Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" for similarities.

Goal 4. The Department will use our public partnerships opportunities with environmental and grassroots groups, industry, academic, union groups, and federal, tribal, and local government to advance environmental justice.

What We Are Doing:

BUREAU OF MINES (BOM): The Bureau currently has a technical proposal to work with Southwest tribes and also explore lead contamination innovative technology alternatives which could assist various Alaska Native and American Indian populations.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM): The Resource Apprenticeships Program (RAPS) works with the BIA, Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the USDA Forest Service to organize work and educational experiences for minority and low income high school and college students. Other state-specific examples follow: BLM Montana participates in the Montana Interagency Ecosystem Management Committee; BLM Oregon participates in ongoing Tribal Leadership Forums hosted by the BIA to explore federal/tribal relations in the Northwest; the Coeur d'Alene Basin Interagency Group is a large group of federal, Tribal, State, and local governments which actively work together to clean up damage from past mining activities.

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING: OSM is working with the Navajo Nation to address safety and environmental hazards resulting from past mining of uranium. OSM and several other agencies within Interior--Bureau of Mines, U.S. Geological Survey, and Fish and Wildlife Services--as well as non-Interior agencies, such as the Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, the Soil Conservation Service, and the National Mine Land Reclamation Center, have significant responsibility for Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) issues. OSM has entitled this program the Appalachian Clean Steam Initiative (ACSI). One of the primary objectives of the ACSI is to clean up streams polluted by acid mine drainage.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION: The Technical Service Center is working on a program called Technical Assistance for Native Americans with seed funding from Reclamation's Native American Affairs Office. This program provides technical assistance on studies, training, and water treatment projects for small Native American communities. It also ensures that there are reliable and safe drinking water systems that comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Also, a core team from the Technical Service Center will perform water treatment and wastewater treatment plant audits to determine if those plants are in compliance.

Goal 4.--What We Are Doing

Nearly all studies or projects that Reclamation is involved with include potential impacts to tribes, the poor, and/or minorities. Some examples of such studies include the Truckee River Operating Agreement EIS/EIR, several of the Department of Interior National Irrigation Water Quality Program studies, and the Columbia River System Operating Review EIS. Indian tribes have participated as cooperating agencies on several major Reclamation EIS's.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE: The FWS is involved in a variety of agreements and partnerships with other Federal agencies, the States, and other non-Federal entities such as:

- Partners for Resources Education and the Federal Interagency Council on Interpretation.
- The Interorganizational Committee on Guidelines and Principles for Social Impact Assessment. The Committee, comprised of social scientists representing government, academia, and the private sector, published a document in May 1994, entitled "Guidelines and Principles for Social Impact Assessment."
- In June 1994, the FWS released its Native American Policy that encourages a partnership approach with American Indian governments in managing fish and wildlife resources.
- At the Regional level, for example, Region 4 (southeast United States) is funding one FTE to Zoo Atlanta. Zoo Atlanta is an intercity zoo which reaches a substantial urban minority population. The Regional Office is also represented on the Environmental Justice and Urban Microclimate Committees of the Atlanta Environmental Priorities Project. In Region 2 (southwest United States), the Service is a participant on Federal Native American water rights teams.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS: The BIA was the lead in preparing an MOU with EPA, IHS and Housing and Urban Development which addressed roles and responsibilities on various environmental issues on Indian lands. These four agencies meet regularly to address major environmental and health related concerns as they appear.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: The NPS participates with a variety of interagency work groups such as the National Response Team and the Environmental Protection Agency monthly environmental forum that can be useful in promoting the Departmental environmental justice strategic plan.

Goal 4.--What We Can Do

Strategies on what we can do:

A. Identify opportunities to develop partnerships with Tribal governments, consistent with mission needs to provide necessary technical assistance to enhance tribal capacity to address environmental, health, and welfare concerns.

Progress Measurement - The Department will reactivate and provide resources to implement the Memorandum of Understanding with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Indian Health Service and other Federal organizations which coordinate Federal activity to:

- 1. Ensure that each agency's resources are effectively utilized in alleviating waste disposal problems on tribal lands;**
- 2. Support and work with the agencies and tribal governments and organizations researching environmental risk issues for tribal populations and lands;**
- 3. Work with agencies, tribes and tribal colleges to determine environmental education program needs of the tribes;**
- 4. Identify through tribal and interagency communication tools for assessing tribal environmental justice concerns and issues;**
- 5. Enhance Federal agency knowledge and understanding of the special relationship with tribes.**

B. Identify opportunities to develop partnerships with academic institutions, consistent with mission needs to provide technical and financial assistance to enhance education endeavors. Expand and promote environmental justice education programs with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

Progress Measurement - A DOI joint program with the Council of Environmental Quality and a tribal college to discuss NEPA and the Environmental Justice process has been proposed for 1995. To advance environmental justice implementation, the DOI will use diversity opportunities within the Department and its Bureaus in the areas of employment, contracting, and academic partnerships.

Goal 4.--What We Can Do

C. Identify opportunities to develop partnerships with union groups, industry, environmental, and state and local government to enhance identifying and solving environmental justice issues.

Progress Measurement - Interior officials will work with its community based organizations, unions, employee chapters such as offices of Blacks in Government and National Image, external groups such as the Western Governor's Association and the Religious Partnership Council, industry organizations such as the Chemical Manufacturers Association, tribal and inter-tribal organizations, and others to share information on environmental justice and to engage our Federal members in strategies to improve participation in minority and low-income communities. Within the implementation plan of February 1995 specific initiatives will be identified.

